

# A Functional Needs Framework for Every Community Emergency Planning and Response for People with Disabilities



## Getting Everybody Out

### Mass Evacuation Considerations for People with Disabilities

This document is part of a series created by Disability Alliance BC in order to help local Emergency Programs in British Columbia integrate the needs of people with disabilities into their emergency plans. The series was developed for the **A Functional Needs Framework for Every Community** project, based on key areas identified by local Emergency Programs.

Created by  
Disability Alliance BC



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## INVOLVING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN PLANNING FOR EVACUATIONS

Include disability and seniors' organizations from the community in your planning. Work with them to identify and address evacuation issues such as: notification, evacuation phases and transportation needs.

To ensure full participation by these populations, make sure that your meetings are held in accessible facilities and provide alternative formats for communication, if needed.

## MAPPING TRANSPORTATION-DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS

There can be many reasons why individuals in your community do not have access to a vehicle for evacuating:

- Disability
- Age
- Low-income
- Temporary injury
- Legal restrictions

It is important to pre-identify, locate and prioritize transportation-disadvantaged populations as comprehensively as possible. Map the locations of:

- Low-income housing
- Seniors' housing
- Group homes
- Assisted living facilities
- Long-term care facilities

Individuals with disabilities and functional limitations living independently in the community will not be as easily identified and captured in the mapping process. However, it is worth noting that most people with disabilities, like other citizens, may be out-and-about in the community at work, the library, grocery store, the doctor, at an event or at a place of worship. Encourage people to be proactive about their own personal preparedness.

## IDENTIFYING ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES

Identify and inventory the types of accessible transportation vehicles you have in your community. For example:

- Paratransit
- Fixed route buses
- Accessible taxis
- School buses
- Airport shuttle buses
- Accessible vans from assisted living and care facilities



- Accessible vans from adult daycare programs and seniors centres
- Accessible vans from places of worship

Build relationships and mutual aid agreements with these organizations, in order to have access to these vehicles when mass evacuation of the population is necessary. Ensure that these transportation providers are aware of protocol, procedures, responsibility and chain of command to ensure efficient deployment and safety.

## PLANNING FOR EVACUATION OF PEOPLE WITH FUNCTIONAL LIMITATIONS

### EVACUATING PEOPLE WITH MOBILITY DISABILITIES

Evacuating people with mobility disabilities will be more complex than evacuating the general population.

- Plan for more time to load and unload people who use wheelchairs into evacuation vehicles; consider pre-evacuating these individuals prior to evacuation orders to the general public.
- Plan for transporting assistive equipment and devices with the individual. If this does not happen, they will become dependent on ESS personnel and others when they arrive at a reception centre or group lodging. Also, equipment is usually customized for each person, is expensive and is not easily replaced.
- If time does not allow transportation of equipment along with the person for imminent safety reasons, tag the person's equipment for later retrieval. Develop a system for this.

### HOW COMMUNICATION HAPPENS DURING AN EMERGENCY AND DISASTER IS CRITICAL. MAKING SURE THAT EVERYONE GETS THE MESSAGE CAN MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE OR DEATH.

- Develop a procedure for door-to-door evacuation notification that identifies people with mobility disabilities who will need help evacuating.
- If establishing public pick-up locations for evacuation, plan for non-ambulatory individuals who will not be able to make it to pick up locations on their own. Make sure the locations are accessible, i.e.: with even and uninterrupted surfaces.

### COMMUNICATING EVACUATION ALERTS AND ORDERS USING ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

How communication happens during an emergency and disaster is critical. Making sure that everyone gets the message can mean the difference between life or death. Please read the document in this series titled, *Making Sure People with Communication Disabilities Get the Message*, for details on alternative formats and providing information to people with communication disabilities.

- Based on the information you gather mapping transportation-disadvantaged populations, disseminate information on community evacuation procedures to the identified groups and agencies before an emergency. Make sure you provide information in alternative formats and include it on your accessible website.
- Use multiple methods of communication during door-to-door notification of evacuation alerts and orders: oral,



written (plain language), pictograms and text message alerts. A person who is deaf will not hear someone knocking at the door. A person with a visual disability will not be able to read a printed notice. A person with a mobility disability may not be able to get to the door even if they are home. A person with an intellectual disability or someone with low-literacy may need pictures to help explain the message. ■

